

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 EUR-25 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

ACDA-19 DRC-01 OPR-02 EB-11 FAA-00 OC-06 CCO-00

USSS-00 NIC-01 OMB-01 SY-10 /175 W

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FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4156

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 3286

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT EG

SUBJ: EGYPT AFTER THE HOSTILITIES: INTERNAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: POLITICALLY, EGYPT APPEARS TO HAVE WEATHERED
THREE WEEKS OF HOSTILITIES WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE
STRAIN, MOST IMPORTANT, THERE APPEARS TO BE LITTLE
INTERNAL WEAKNESS AT PRESENT THAT MIGHT THREATEN
SADAT'S POSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. LESS THAN A WEEK AFTER THE END OF HOSTILITIES WITH
ISRAEL, EGYPT IS RETURNING TO A NORMAL PATTERN OF
EXISTENCE. THE WAR HAS APPARENTLY AFFECTED NORMAL DAY-
TO-DAY ACTIVITIES VERY LITTLE. THERE ARE SOME SHORTAGES
IN STORES; GASOLINE IS STILL RATIONED; AND PRICES OF
COMMODITIES AND SERVICES HAVE RISEN CONSIDERABLY.
OCCASIONAL MILITARY VEHICLES AND AMBULANCES, ALONG WITH
BLUEING OF MANY WINDOWS, ARE OTHER REMINDERS THAT
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CAIRO IS ONLY DAYS REMOVED FROM WAR.

2. NEVERTHELESS, A VISIBLE RELAXATION HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS. ALMOST ALL SHOPS ARE OPEN, GOVERNMENT OFFICES ARE HARD AT WORK, AND SERVICES DISRUPTED ON OCTOBER 6--SUCH AS AIRLINES--ARE RETURNING TO NORMAL OPERATIONS. CAIRO'S STREETS ARE BEING LIT AGAIN AT NIGHT, AND SCHOOLS WILL RESUME SESSION ON NOVEMBER 3.

3. PUBLIC FEARS OF ISRAELI "INFILTRATORS," IN EVIDENCE AT END OF LAST WEEK, HAVE APPARENTLY DECREASED. EGYPTIANS HAVE NOW BEGUN TO DISMISS THE ISRAELI PRESENCE ON THE WEST BANK OF THE CANAL AS BEING OF LESS CONCERN THAN THEY HAD ORIGINALLY IMAGINED; AND PRESS HAS DONE ITS BEST TO CONVEY IMPRESSION THAT MILITARY SITUATION REMAINS GOOD. EVEN POLITICALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE EGYPTIANS HAVE APPARENTLY RATIONALIZED LAST WEEK'S THREAT INTO THIS WEEK'S IRRITATION. IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS IS BELIEF THAT THIRD ARMY IS NOT ABOUT TO GO UNDER.

4. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS HAS IN PAST THREE DAYS CHANGED MOOD DRAMATICALLY. FROM CHARGES OF ISRAELI BREACHES OF CEASEFIRE AND HIGHLY DEFENSIVE ARTICLES ABOUT MILITARY SITUATION ON THE GROUND, PRESS HAS MOVED TOWARD POLITICAL SUBJECTS. PRIMARY FOCUS IS ON DIPLOMATIC MOVES TO SOLVE ME CRISIS: EGYPTIAN/US CONSULTATIONS, KUZNETSOV VISIT TO EGYPT, MRS. MEIR'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON, ETC. IN THIS, TOO, THERE APPEARS TO BE A SENSE OF OPTIMISM, CONSCIOUSLY HEIGHTENED BY ORCHESTRATION OF NEWS; IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, FOR EXAMPLE, FOR NEWSPAPER READERS TO MISS SIGNIFICANCE IN AHRAH'S FRONT PAGE PHOTO OF OCTOBER 31, OF A SMILING ISMAIL FAHMY PRESSING HANDS WITH US SECRETARY OF STATE. AS SIGNIFICANT IS HEADLINE OF SHORT ARTICLE IN SAME EDITION OF AHRAH: "EGYPT AND ISRAEL AGREE TO EXCHANGE WOUNDED PRISONERS." IT IS THE FIRST TIME TO OUR RECOLLECTION THAT EGYPTIAN PRESS HAS EVER MENTIONED EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL OVER ANYTHING.

5. CRITICAL QUESTIONS ARE WHETHER THIS APPARENT MOOD
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OF OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE REFLECTS VIEW OF GOE POWER STRUCTURE, AND IF SO, HOW IT AFFECTS SADAT'S OWN POSITION. ONE INDICATOR IS HEYKAL, WHO HAS TOLD MANY JOURNALISTS IN PAST FEW DAYS THAT HE WAS OPPOSED TO CEASEFIRE, BUT THAT OPPORTUNITY NOW EXISTS FOR POLITICAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT. HIS REMARKS CONTAIN IMPLICIT THREAT THAT UNLESS THERE IS SUCH MOVEMENT, EGYPT WILL RESUME FIGHTING; BUT HE APPEARS TO SEE BRIEF

TIME "WINDOW" IN WHICH MEANINGFUL SETTLEMENT PROCESS MAY OCCUR. SAYYID MAR'I IS REPORTED TO HAVE MADE SIMILAR REMARKS, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GOE HAVE APPARENTLY ALSO SUPPRESSED INITIAL UNHAPPINESS OVER CEASEFIRE IN BELIEF THAT IT MAY LEAD TO ACHIEVEMENT OF THEIR POLITICAL GOALS. PICTURE THAT EMERGES IS OF A CIVILIAN ESTABLISHMENT WILLING TO SUPPORT SADAT FOR AT LEAST A BRIEF PERIOD.

56. SITUATION IN EGYPTIAN MILITARY IS LESS CLEAR. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE REPORTED DISSATISFACTION IN RANKS WITH OCTOBER 22 CEASEFIRE DECISION, WHICH MANY APPEARED TO REGARD AS A POLITICAL ACT WITHOUT MILITARY JUSTIFICATION, AND TODAY SADAT HAS STATED THAT HE WAS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM EGYPTIAN MILITARY TO CONTINUE THE FIGHTING. POSSIBLY AS THE RESULT OF GROWING REALIZATION OF SIZE OF ISRAELI FORCE ON WEST BANK AND SIZE OF EGYPTIAN LOSSES, HOWEVER, THIS NO LONGER APPEARS TO BE A FACTOR. BASIC POINT IS THAT EGYPTIAN ARMY IS MOST POWERFUL FORCE IN COUNTRY, BUT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF DISLOYALTY OR INTEREST IN ASSUMING NON-MILITARY FUNCTIONS. MILITARY LEADERSHIP, MOREOVER, APPEARS TO BE INTACT AND HAS NOT SUFFERED GENERAL LOSS OF PRESTIGE FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL ISRAELI MILITARY PENETRATION OF WEST BANK AND BLOCKADE OF THIRD ARMY. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN NO CONFIRMATION OF STORIES CIRCULATING FIVE DAYS AGO THAT BOTH WAR MINISTER AND COS SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS, AND THERE IS CONSIDERABLE COUNTERVAILING EVIDENCE THAT BOTH WERE ON THE JOB YESTERDAY, OCTOBER 30.

7. IN SUM, EGYPTIAN INTERNAL SCENE IS APPARENTLY STABLE AND KEY SECTORS OF POPULATION AND ESTABLISHMENT
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SHOW NO SIGN OF SIGNIFICANT DISSATISFACTION WITH EITHER SITUATION OR SADAT.
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